

# La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Specific Plan

## General Plan Amendment Narrative

Updated October 2, 2015

### Description of the Amendment

La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Association requested by petition that the City adopt a specific plan for their neighborhood. In July 2014, the City Council accepted their petition and requested that City staff begin work on the updating the 2012 draft of the plan.

Specific Plans incorporated by reference will be added to a list following Page XV-6 of the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030. The goals and policies of the Specific Plan may also be placed in Appendix E for ease of reference.

The need for this amendment to the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030 is to adopt by reference a Specific Plan for the La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood that promotes the neighborhoods vision and improves the implementation of the Regional Plan in this area.

### Community Benefits and Considerations:

The intent of the La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Specific Plan is to provide a clear and comprehensive guide for compatible reinvestment that preserves and enhances the neighborhood character through encouraging:

- Preservation and restoration of historic buildings;
- Quality urban design;
- Enhanced connections between the corridors, activity centers, and the neighborhood; and
- Improved access to services and jobs.

Neighborhood residents, property owners and all of Flagstaff would benefit from the improved housing, connectivity, and the historic and cultural preservation of the neighborhood. The challenges to implementing the Specific Plan are:

- Transition Area and Commercial Edge's impact to neighborhood character
- Existing entitlements in Highway Commercial zoning
- Extension of a minor collector through the neighborhood- Regional v. neighborhood traffic needs
- Arrowhead Village Mobile Home Park - floodplain, relocation, and affordable housing issues
- Housing occupancy (owner v. renter)
- Nonconforming uses

## Regional Plan Conformance Narrative

One way the Specific Plan improves the ability of the City and partners to implement the General Plan goals and policies is by identifying the ones most relevant to the area. These goals and policies should be more heavily weighted in this the planning boundary than other direction in the Regional Plan. On Page 49, the Specific Plan states, "If an FRP30 goal or policy is tied to a goal in the Specific Plan, then it should be weighted more heavily in future decision-making than a goal that is not listed in this chapter. The exception to this is if a corridor plan for South Milton Road or Route 66 comes to a different conclusion than the Specific Plan, then that Corridor Plan would take precedence in transportation and infrastructure decisions." Not all of the Goals and Policies included in this analysis of Plan conformance are listed in the Specific Plan as one that should be more heavily weighted.

### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

#### Environmental Planning and Conservation

Map 7 shows the Old Town Springs as a significant natural resource

#### Analysis

The Old Town Springs Park Master Plan and Implementation Strategy 3.1 preserve and enhance the Old Town Spring which is a significant cultural and natural resource. Under the Specific Plan, the function of the spring and its prominence in the park would be improved, and natural history interpretation would be provided for educating the public on the role of the spring in Flagstaff's history.

#### Water Resources

The Clay Avenue Wash is part of the Rio de Flag Flood Control Project as shown on Map 11.

Policy WR.5.6. Implement stormwater harvesting techniques to support water conservation strategies by collecting and using local precipitation in the vicinity where it falls to support both human and overall watershed health needs.

Policy WR.5.7. Support healthy watershed characteristics through implementation of practices, consistent with the City of Flagstaff Low Impact Design Manual, that improve flood control and flood attenuation, stormwater quality, and water sustainability; increase groundwater recharge; enhance open space quality; increase biodiversity; and reduce land disturbance and soil compaction.

#### Analysis

Most needs for stormwater issues in the neighborhood are addressed by the implementation of Rio de Flag Flood Control Project. If the project is not funded or becomes infeasible, than the need to reduce the impact of the floodplain on the planning area would remain and need to be addressed by the City in an alternate manner. Goal 15 addresses this point.

Policy 12.4 and 12.6 further refine the use of stormwater harvesting and efficiently managing water demand for street improvements.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT
Community Character
<p>Policy CC.1.1. Preserve the natural character of the region through planning and design to maintain views of significant landmarks, sloping landforms, rock outcroppings, water courses, floodplains, and meadows, and conserve stands of ponderosa pine.</p> <p>Policy CC.1.4: Identify, protect, and enhance gateways, gateway corridors, and gateway communities.</p>
Goal CC.2: Preserve, restore, and rehabilitate heritage resources to better appreciate our culture.
Goal CC.3. Preserve, restore, enhance, and reflect the design traditions of Flagstaff in all public and private development efforts.
<p>Policy CC.4.1: Design streetscapes to be context sensitive and transportation systems to reflect the desired land use while balancing the needs of all modes for traffic safety and construction and maintenance costs.</p> <p>Policy CC.4.4: Design streets and parking lots to balance automobile facilities, recognize human-scale and pedestrian needs, and accentuate the surrounding environment.</p> <p>Policy CC.4.7. Develop an urban forestry program to catalog, preserve old growth pines, and plant new urban trees.</p>
Policy CC.5.4. Complete sidewalks and Flagstaff Urban Trails System connections for all schools, community colleges, and university campuses.

Analysis: The Specific Plan protects view sheds and natural features in the neighborhood through Goal 9, Policies 6T.7 and 6C.3, and Implementation Strategy 3.1. Heritage Resources and their context are supported by Goals 6N, 7 and 8.

Goal 6 supports the preservation and enhancement of Flagstaff's design traditions by illustrating and defining neighborhood-specific design features that can be incorporated into redevelopment projects.

Concept Plan Map 2, Goal 10, Goal 12 and Policy 13.4 support improved streetscapes, street trees, and safety for all modes in the neighborhood. Implementation Strategy 12.5 would provide complete sidewalk connections for Haven Montessori and for residents' access to bus stops.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT (Continued)

### Growth Areas & Land Use

FRP30 identifies the Neighborhood Core (see Map 13) as an Urban Neighborhood within the pedestrian shed of three Activity Center.

FRP30 identifies the Transition Area (see Map 13) as an existing Suburban/Future Urban area within the pedestrian shed of two Activity Centers. Policy LU.18.8: Increase residential densities, live-work units, and home occupations within the activity center's pedestrian shed.

FRP30 identifies the Commercial Edge (see Map 13) roughly north of the intersection of Malpais Lane and Milton Road as the core of an urban activity center and associated corridor. South of Malpais Lane, the Commercial Edge is the core of a Suburban Activity Center and associated corridor. Policy LU.18.2: Strive for activity centers and corridors that are characterized by contextual and distinctive identities, derived from history, environmental features, a mix of uses, well-designed public spaces, parks, plazas, and high-quality design. Policy LU.18.9: Plan activity centers and corridors appropriate to their respective regional or neighborhood scale.

Policy LU.1.2: Develop reinvestment plans with neighborhood input, identifying the center, mix of uses, connectivity patterns, public spaces, and appropriate spaces for people to live, work, and play.

Policy LU.1.3: Promote reinvestment at the neighborhood scale to include infill of vacant parcels, redevelopment of underutilized properties, aesthetic improvements to public spaces, remodeling of existing buildings and streetscapes, maintaining selected appropriate open space, and programs for the benefit and improvement of the local residents.

Policy LU.3.1. Within the urban, suburban, and rural context, use neighborhoods, activity centers, corridors, public spaces, and connectivity as the structural framework for development.

Policy LU.3.4. Promote transitions between urban, suburban, and rural areas with an appropriate change in development intensity, connectivity, and open space.

Policy LU..5. Encourage the distribution of density within neighborhoods in relationship to associated activity centers and corridors, infrastructure, transportation, and natural constraints such as slopes and drainages.

Policy LU.10.5. Consider vacant and underutilized parcels within the City's existing urban neighborhoods as excellent locations for contextual redevelopment that adds housing, shopping, employment, entertainment, and recreational options for nearby residents and transit patrons.

Analysis: The Area and Place Types of FRP30 are addressed in the Specific Plan by the identification of Neighborhood Policy Areas. Chapter Three's Goal 6, Preserving Neighborhood Character, is divided into Neighborhood Core (6N), Transition Area (6T), and Commercial Edge (6C). The areas are displayed on Map 13. The neighborhood policy areas are not "zones", but instead planning areas which encourage compatible development and design of a variety of land uses

The Plan description of an Urban Neighborhood, excludes Historic Districts from the density and intensity standards of other urban areas in the City. Even though La Plaza Vieja is not an Historic District established by the State, it was identified as one for the purposes of the Regional Plan. Because it is a historic neighborhood, the plan does not encourage increased density in this area. However, the other features of the area type are encouraged in the Specific Plan, including high bicycle and pedestrian

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connectivity.

The General Plan description of an activity center and pedestrian shed is slightly different for Urban and Suburban area types and neighborhood and regional scales. The activity centers on the periphery of La Plaza Vieja are an Urban neighborhood-scale activity center and a Suburban regional-scale activity center. These two types of activity centers have similar density, intensity, mass, scale and forms of buildings but emphasize different road features. A Suburban activity center is more auto-oriented and an urban activity center provides more pedestrian opportunities. Because of the scale and level of congestion on Milton Road, these differences are unlikely to be measureable along the Commercial Edge and have a stronger influence on the pedestrian shed. For instance, the pedestrian shed of the Urban activity center should have a stronger road connectivity, ideally a gridded system, and a Suburban pedestrian shed should have strong bicycle and pedestrian connections with a less connected road system. The Specific Plan addresses these distinctions by identifying parcels that fit the description of the commercial core and corridor description as part of the Commercial Edge and parcels that are within the pedestrian shed as the Transition Area. The description of pedestrian sheds in both contexts is primarily residential and smaller businesses but most of the Transition Area in La Plaza Vieja is zoned Highway Commercial and because of the central location, could likely sustain a mixed of uses that supports residential densities and a higher percentage of commercial than other activity centers. Therefore, the Specific Plan expands the definition of uses compatible with the pedestrian shed to include commercial services that support residents, civic uses and offices. The expansion of the urban street grid within the Future Urban area and improvement of road crossing and bicycle and pedestrian connections also support the urban pedestrian shed and the FUTS trail extension in the alternative transportation scenario create greater pedestrian connections in the Suburban area.

The Concept Plan shows how this could be accomplished through building forms and uses that put higher residential densities in the interior of the Transition Zone and commercial and office buildings in locations with greater access to the Commercial Edge and arterials streets (See Illustrations 1, 2, 3 and 6).

Policy LU.1.12. Seek fair and proper relocation of existing residents and businesses in areas affected by redevelopment and reinvestment, where necessary.

Analysis: Policy 6.1 states a preference that reinvestment that does not require relocation of existing residents and businesses is preferred and incorporates the related Regional Plan policy as a high priority for the neighborhood.

Policy LU.10.6. In mixed use developments, encourage residential uses located above and behind commercial uses within urban areas as well as a variety of housing types where appropriate.

Analysis: The Concept Plan demonstrated how a variety of housing types can be incorporated into the neighborhood in a compatible manner. Illustration 1 even suggests that building types specific to the neighborhood can be developed to better implement townhouses and attached residences without sacrificing the architectural form and details of the historic single family homes.

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Policy LU.5.6. Encourage the placement of institutional and civic buildings centrally within a neighborhood to promote walkability and multi-use recreation spaces.

Policy LU.10.9. Civic spaces must be well designed, accessible, and central to the urban fabric.

Analysis: Goals 3, 4 and 5 promote a variety of civic spaces without identifying their location. Most of the spaces discussed would be in the Transition Area which is central to the neighborhood. Also Policy 6T.1 promotes paseos and public spaces in building design to increase connections between the neighborhood and the commercial areas.

Policy LU.10.1. Prioritize connectivity within all urban neighborhoods and activity centers

Policy LU.10.7. Invest in infrastructure and right-of-way enhancements as an incentive for private investment in urban neighborhoods and activity centers.

Policy LU.13.1. Prioritize connectivity for walking, biking, and driving within and between surrounding neighborhoods.

Analysis: The Specific Plan proposes many implementation strategies that would improve the connectivity throughout the neighborhood and to the activity centers. The major right-of-way enhancements proposed are street trees, low impact design, landscaping, new local and minor collectors and bicycle and pedestrian crossings on arterials and across the railroad. Reconnecting La Plaza Vieja with adjacent neighborhoods and services could be a major contribution to quality of life in the neighborhood.

Policy LU.10.2. Support on-street parking, shared lots, and parking structures.

Analysis: The Specific Plan supports the expansion of available on-street parking and incorporates shared parking lots and driveways in the Transition Area (6T.3). In the proposed replacement pages, shared parking lots and driveways are also incorporated into the Commercial Edge (6C.4). However, parking structures would play a limited role in the vision of Transition Area Neighborhood Policy Area because they are out of character with the nearby Neighborhood Core. Exceptions would be when the lot size or width would limit the ability to construct a building that would otherwise be compatible. The Commercial Edge is the most appropriate area for structured parking in the planning area.

Goal LU.19. Develop a manageable evolution of the main corridors into contextual place makers.

Policy LU.19.2. Establish the context and regional or neighborhood scale of each corridor prior to design with special consideration for those intended to remain residential or natural in character.

Policy LU.19.4. Balance automobile use, parking, bicycle access, while prioritizing pedestrian safety along all corridors.

Analysis: The scale of corridors next to the La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood is determined by the scale of the overlapping activity centers U8 and S7. Therefore, the Commercial Edge incorporates all parcels along Route 66 and Milton as part of the commercial core and in the proposed replacement pages could incorporate properties along South Malpais Lane and Blackbird Roost. The wider commercial edge near activity center S7 is consistent with other regional-scale centers, such as Woodlands Village and the Flagstaff Mall.

Goal 13 addresses the mix of uses and safety concerns along corridors and addresses the concerns about creation of a new corridor in the neighborhood's Transition Area. Goal 11 addresses the need for safe bicycle and pedestrian crossings across the corridors.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT (Continued)

### Transportation

Map 25 in the Flagstaff Regional Transportation Plan and FRP30 proposes a road extension that connects the intersection of Butler Avenue and South Milton Road to Kaibab Lane and Woodlands Village Boulevard. The Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization's Regional Transportation Plan identifies this as a conditional future road, which means that it needs further analysis before the City decides to pursue it or not.

Goal T.1. Improve mobility and access throughout the region.

Policy T.1.1. Integrate a balanced, multimodal, regional transportation system.

Policy T.1.3. Transportation systems are consistent with the place type and needs of people.

Policy T.1.5. Manage the operation and interaction of all modal systems for efficiency, effectiveness, safety, and to best mitigate traffic congestion.

Analysis: The Clay Avenue extension was envisioned as a possible solution to the congestion at Route 66 and Milton Road in the Regional Plan. Without a full corridor study, the City staff has been unable to determine, if the route could improve the efficiency of transportation without further impacting Milton Road. As part of the public process for the Plan, the core team identified a concept for making the same connection further south to avoid impacting the single family homes along Clay Avenue. The Concept Plan includes the McCracken Street Extension which could serve the same regional transportation needs if it is determined that the road would function as intended. The McCracken Street alignment would be an improvement over the Clay alignment, because it would better meet the Regional Plan goals for neighborhood preservation (NH), it would allow Clay Avenue to be downgraded to a local road between the school and park and the Neighborhood Core, and it would provide better ingress and egress to commercial properties that have the narrow side of the parcel facing the existing streets. A new street could also be a better route for transit.

The Concept Plan also includes a street scenario to improve local access and circulation, if the extension of a minor collector is not pursued as a regional transportation solution. The neighborhood residents have stated a strong preference for this scenario. Another reason the local street scenario might be pursued is if the Rio de Flag Flood Control project does not improve the stormwater drainage in the neighborhood, and extension along McCracken Street is not feasible.

Policy T.1.2. Apply Complete Street Guidelines to accommodate all appropriate modes of travel in transportation improvement projects.

Policy T.1.8. Plan for development to provide on-site, publicly-owned transportation improvements and provide adequate parking.

Goal T.2. Improve transportation safety and efficiency for all modes.

Policy T.2.3: Provide safety programs and infrastructure to protect the most vulnerable travelers, including the young, elderly, mobility impaired, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Policy T.3.3: Couple transportation investments with desired land use patterns to enhance and protect the quality and livability of neighborhoods, activity centers, and community places.

Policy T.3.5: Design transportation infrastructure that implements ecosystem-based design



strategies to manage stormwater and minimize adverse environmental impacts.

Policy T.3.8: Promote transportation options such as increased public transit and more bike lanes to reduce congestion, fuel consumption, and overall carbon emissions and promote walkable community design.

Policy T.4.1: Promote context sensitive solutions (CSS) supportive of planned land uses, integration of related infrastructure needs, and desired community character elements in all transportation investments.

Goal T.5: Increase the availability and use of pedestrian infrastructure, including FUTS, as a critical element of a safe and livable community.

Policy T.5.4. Design streets with continuous pedestrian infrastructure of sufficient width to provide safe, accessible use and opportunities for shelter.

Policy T.6.2: Establish and maintain a comprehensive, consistent, and highly connected system of bikeways and FUTS trails

Analysis: Goals 10, 11, 12 and 13 support a complete and connected system of roads, sidewalks, and trails with pedestrian infrastructure that supports a livable and safe community. Policy 12.7 specifically states a preference for public streets and 12.4 and 12.6 support low impact design features for management of stormwater in streetscape design.

The McCracken Street Extension improves the ability of the City to meet some elements of the Transportation goals and policies from FRP30 but interferes with others. While moving the extension south from Clay Avenue allows better preservation of the neighborhood character and preservation of the Neighborhood Core, it impedes the ability to make FUTS connections along the Clay Avenue Wash that takes advantage of the natural setting. Achieving both of these goals along the same alignment would be difficult. Therefore, Scenario 2 which includes the extension shows the FUTS trail along a different alignment to the north. This alignment takes advantage of traffic calming in the Neighborhood Core and the downgrade of Clay Avenue to a local street. The final decision on which scenario is implemented is contingent on a future corridor study and the Rio de Flag Flood Control project.

Goal T.7: Provide a high-quality, safe, convenient, accessible public transportation system, where feasible, to serve as an attractive alternative to single-occupant vehicles.

Analysis: Goal 14 supports improved transit and paratransit services for the planning area.

Cost of Development

Policy CD.1.5. Require that new development pay for a fair and rough proportional share of public facilities, services, and infrastructure.

Analysis: Providing further clarity on the corridors within the planning area, their relationship to area and place types and to Engineering Standards will assist the City staff in negotiating development agreements and prioritize land acquisition for new roads. Ultimately this ensures that new development is able to determine their fair and rough proportional share of public facilities, services and infrastructure.



## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

### Neighborhoods, Housing & Urban Conservation

Policy NH.1.1: Preserve and enhance existing neighborhoods.

Policy NH.1.3: Interconnect existing and new neighborhoods through patterns of development, with complete streets, sidewalks, and trails.

Policy NH.1.4: Foster points of activities, services, increased densities, and transit connections in urban and suburban neighborhoods.

Policy NH.1.6: New development, especially on the periphery, will contribute to completing neighborhoods, including interconnecting with other neighborhoods; providing parks, civic spaces, and a variety of housing types; and protecting sensitive natural and cultural features.

Policy NH.1.7: Develop appropriate programs and tools to ensure the appropriate placement, design, and operation of new student housing developments consistent with neighborhood character and scale.

Policy NH.1.8: Prioritize the stabilization of a neighborhood's identity and maintain cultural diversity as new development occurs.

Policy NH 6.2: Use urban conservation tools to revitalize existing underutilized activity centers to their potential.

Analysis: Goal 6 is intended to provide guidance so that new development is tied to the existing neighborhood in the character of buildings, streets, and cultural features. The protection of viewsheds and compatible design of new buildings and streets will not entirely overcome the effects of buildings that may be a much larger mass and scale than the surrounding neighborhood but may soften the transition between the neighborhood and the frontage of Milton Road and Route 66.

Student housing is not directly addressed in the plan but it was considered as part of the discussion surrounding rental properties and the mass, scale and form of buildings in the Transition Area. Traffic and on-street parking were also addressed with student housing in mind.

### Goal NH.4: All housing is safe and sanitary.

Policy NH.4.1: Expand the availability of affordable housing throughout the region by preserving existing housing, including housing for very low-income persons.

Policy NH.4.2: Reduce substandard housing units by conserving and rehabilitating existing housing stock to minimize impacts on existing residents.

Policy NH.4.5: Renovate the existing housing stock to conserve energy and reduce utility and maintenance costs for owners and occupants.

Analysis: Goals 7 and 8 promote preservation of the existing housing in the neighborhood both for the purpose of providing affordable housing and for protection of the neighborhood's historic and cultural character. This is achieved through provision of incentives to property owners and addressing the needs of landlords, renters and owners who occupy their homes.

## Economic Development

Policy ED.3.1: Encourage regional economic development partners to continue proactive programs to foster the retention and expansion of existing enterprises and home-based businesses in the community.

Policy ED.3.5: Advocate the economic sustainability and growth of businesses with opportunities for transitional commercial space, leased space, and property ownership.

Analysis: The La Plaza Vieja Specific Plan seeks to provide space for small neighborhood-based business to start and grow with supportive services from the LPVNA under Goal 15.

## Recreation

Goal REC.1: Maintain and grow the region's healthy system of convenient and accessible parks, recreation facilities, and trails.

Analysis: Goal 3 and the associated policies and implement strategies provide a means for implementing this within the La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood boundary and Appendix 1 helps identify how the improvements could be paid for.

## Impacts

The La Plaza Vieja Specific Plan is designed to implement the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030, and therefore, has population, economic, natural resources, and transportation impacts that fall within the range predicted by that document. FRP30 was built on land use assumptions that showed how the City might build out to a population of approximately 150,000 residents and 70,000 jobs. Even though this assumption means a doubling of the population, it still did not represent a maximum build out of all zoning entitlements. In fact, Highway Commercial is so flexible that using all the entitlements associated with it would be difficult for most property owners because of restrictions that come from building codes, fire codes and the cost of their proportional share of public improvements. Therefore, the fact that the Specific Plan does not illustrate maximum build out of the entitlements in La Plaza Vieja does not constitute an impact on the regional level or at the property level.